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No. 59.

1871
BLUE AND CHERRY.

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A Comedy, in One Act.

BY OLIVER S. LELAND


BOSTON:

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BLUE AND CHERRY;

OR,

APPEARANCES ARE DECEITFUL.

A Commedietta,

IN ONE ACT.

BY

OLIVER S. LELAND,

AUTHOR OF "BEATRICE, OR FALSE AND TRUE," ETC.



BOSTON:

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1871.

PS635
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BLUE AND CHERRY.



CHARACTERS

Wallack's Theatre, New York.

Colonel Pompley,	Mr. Dyott.
Lord Horace Sackville, his nephew, . .	Mr. Lester Wallack.
Charles Ormonde,	Mr. Levere.
Lady Florence Sackville,	Mrs. Hoey.
Rose, her maid,	Miss Mary Gannon.



SCENE. — Near London.

TIME. — Present day.

TIME OF REPRESENTATION. — About one hour.

COSTUMES. — Modern and appropriate.



Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1871,
By CHARLES H. SPENCER, AGENT,
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BLUE AND CHERRY;

OR,

APPEARANCES ARE DECEITFUL.

ACT THE FIRST

SCENE. *An elegant apartment in the house of LORD SACKVILLE.*
— Doors R. H. 1 E. and L. H. 1 E. — C. doors in flat. — Tables R.
H. and L. H., with writing materials. — Small bell on table,
&c., &c.

Enter LADY FLORENCE and CHARLES ORMONDE, C. D. F.

Florence. Ah, me, Ormonde, such an early visit, and from you! It is really charming, but very dangerous. The good village gossips will talk such scandal about me!

Ormonde. About you, madam? That is impossible, for you bear with impunity the reputation of the prettiest and —

Flor. (laughing). Hush! Hush! — if they should only hear you.

Orm. But I have come wholly upon business.

Flor. Wholly?

Orm. Yes, madam — unfortunately.

Flor. Ah, now you are complimentary. Well, sir, what is this business which takes you so early from your studies.

Orm. I have come concerning that charming country-seat belonging to the old fox hunter, Sir Gilbert Ralton. He wishes to sell it, and as I knew you admired the property —

Flor. (interrupting). It is my dream! I could make of it a perfect paradise. But my husband must first be willing to purchase it.

Orm. He! Why he could pay for it out of his month's savings. Besides, does he not worship you, and obey all your wishes.

Flor. Not always. There are days when my credit is unlimited, — and others when I must —

Orm. What — yield?

Flor. No, no, — a woman of spirit never yields. But when I am forced to wait — and it's very tiresome —

Orm. It is so, indeed, as I know but too well, for there is one of

whom I have long wished, and yet have never dared to speak to you — your young cousin, Alice Woodville.

Flor. What, Alice! cousin Alice! And do you love her? Is it possible (*laughing*) — you who came “wholly upon business”?

Orm. Yes, I love her. I have loved her since last autumn — since those three short months that she passed here.

Flor. And in spite of her absence — her residence in London?

Orm. I am now more in love than ever.

Flor. But do you know that my pretty cousin is not rich? that she has but two thousand pounds?

Orm. Indeed! I thought that she had nothing.

Flor. And yet you wish to marry her! Why, sir, your conduct is worthy of the days of chivalry — young, and without fortune, to marry a woman as poor as yourself. It is absolutely heroic!

Orm. And you, then, will be for me?

Flor. Certainly I will; and if it only depended upon me, you should marry my cousin this very day.

Orm. But are you not her only relative?

Flor. Yes. But three months ago her only uncle — a rich old merchant, who had but two heirs (two relatives) — died; and, instead of dying intestate, — which would have saved him a good deal of trouble, — he must needs make a will, by which he bequeathed all his property to the other relative except this paltry two thousand pounds which he gave my poor cousin. As she was under age it was necessary to appoint a guardian. The choice fell upon my husband, and you must apply to him.

Orm. But for that I shall need your protection.

Flor. Of which you are assured. But before attending to your affairs, I must first think a little of my own.

Orm. That is but just.

Flor. And in the first place I must reserve all my means of attack for this charming country-seat; then that will necessitate the carriage and horses I have so longed for — as a woman longs for everything she is denied. So you see there are three things I must find some way to obtain — your marriage is the third. But, hush! Here comes my husband; as yet not a word to him.

Enter HORACE, C. D. F., quickly.

**Hor. (perceiving his wife, stops short. — Aside).* Heavens! my wife! I thought she had gone out. (*Aloud.*) Ah, Florence, I thought you had gone to meet our uncle?

Flor. Whom we expect by the mail train. But just as I was going, our friend Mr. Ormonde called to see me on important business.

Hor. I am much obliged to him. (*Aside.*) Another design on my purse, I suppose — (*looking anxiously towards door, R. H. 1 E.*) — and if he should come while they are here! (*Aloud.*) We will speak of it another time, for our uncle, at present, merits all our attention.

Flor. But what is the matter with you, Horace? You seem troubled.

Hor. I? O, no. (*Aside.*) She suspects something. (*Aloud.*) No, no; nothing. But there are times when a man — without any cause, of course — is nervous — restless —

Flor. And when he needs pleasant thoughts to cheer his mind (*placing her hand affectionately within his arm*). You remember that delightful country-seat of Sir Gilbert Ralton, which you have so long wished to give me?

Hor. (*troubled, and watching anxiously the door, R. H. 1 E.*). O, yes, certainly. But, in the first place, Sir Gilbert must consent to sell it, which he never will —

Flor. And if he did.

Hor. But he won't. He told me so himself.

Flor. But if he did.

Hor. (*embarrassed*). O, then, if he did, I certainly would not say no — but I would not say yes.

Flor. And what, then, would you say?

Hor. I would say that — that — that we would see about it.

Flor. That, too, is my opinion — we will see about it. And here is Mr. Ormonde, who will examine the title, and make all necessary inquiries.

Orm. With the greatest pleasure — this very day, if you wish; and as to the price —

Hor. O, the price will be no obstacle, because when we have once decided (*aside*) not to buy — (*aloud*) — but you are forgetting our uncle! He will find no one to receive him. Come, make haste; it is so far to the station.

Flor. (*she rings for her maid*). Yes, very far — especially when we have to walk. If we only had now that carriage, of which we have been talking so long! (*HORACE makes a gesture of impatience.*) But of course I would not think of asking for it, to-day, when you have just promised to buy me that charming villa — O, of course not! (*Enter ROSE, L. H., with hat and parasol, which she hands to MRS. SACKVILLE.*) Ah, now I am ready!

Hor. (*aside*). At last, thank Heaven!

Flor. But, Horace, are you not coming with me?

Hor. What are you thinking of? To-day, when I have so much to do!

Flor. Ah, I forgot. No matter, Mr. Ormonde will give me his arm. (*Gesture of HORACE.*) A lady must have a cavalier, you know, when her husband is so occupied with business, and — she has no carriage. Good by, dear; good by!

[*Exit with ORMONDE, C. D. F.*

Hor. At last I am alone! (*Turns and perceives ROSE, who is up stage.*) Ah, and what are you doing here?

Rose. Me, sir?

Hor. Yes, you.

Rose. (*brush in hand, and beginning to dust*). Putting the room

to rights, as I always do at this hour, sir, unless (*comes down*) to-day you have some particular objections, sir.

Hor. Particular objections! What particular objections can I have?

Rose. I'm sure I don't know, sir. But you are the master, and as you insisted upon my mistress going *out*; when you are generally so anxious to keep her *in*, I thought you might have some motive, sir — which is none of my business, sir.

Hor. Rose, you are a fool! What motive could I have?

Rose. O, it's none of my business, sir, and I suppose I may go on with my dusting. But, sir, if you are at leisure, I should like to ask you a question.

Hor. A question? Well, speak quickly. What is it?

Rose. Is it true that the 94th Regiment has returned from the Crimea, sir?

Hor. (*astonished.*) Why do you ask me that?

Rose. Because Dick Dareall, the mercer's boy, who went away two years ago, is in that regiment, and he has promised to marry me upon his return, with your permission, sir.

Hor. Ah, that's it, eh? Well, you are rightly informed. The regiment has landed at Portsmouth; and now, if you are discreet and faithful, and above all not curious —

Rose (*quickly*). O, then, there is a secret?

Hor. (*severely*). Again!

Rose. Excuse me, sir — it is not my fault; but my desire for knowledge is too strong for me — and even if you took it out of my wages I could not help it. But I am curious only so long as I don't know; but once a secret is told me I am discretion itself.

Hor. (*aside*). She wants to be bribed — that's clear. (*Puts his hand in waistcoat pocket.*) But, no; if I give her anything I shall be in her power. (*Aloud.*) Leave me! Go!

Rose. (*aside*). Ah, his first movement was a good one. But no matter, I know there is a secret, and I *will* find it out.

Hor. Still here? Why do you not obey me? Go!

Rose. I am going. I am only taking my brush. (*Takes brush, and exit, C. D. F. — HORACE runs to door, L. H., and locks it.*)

Rose (*opening door, C. F., quickly*). Ah, he has locked the door! (*HORACE makes a step towards C. D. — ROSE quickly shuts it, and he locks it.*)

Hor. (*alone*). At last I am alone; and not without difficulty either. As soon as a man has something to conceal, it seems as if the whole world had made up their minds to discover it. (*A knock heard at door, R. H.*) Ah, it was time! A moment longer, and we had been surprised. (*He opens door, R. H., mysteriously.*)

Enter COLONEL POMPLEY, R. H.

Hor. (*embracing him*). My dear uncle!

Col. P. How, nephew, is it only you! So much precaution, so much mystery! Fire and thunder! I had almost thought myself young again, and destined to some romantic adventure.

Hor. Did you not receive a letter from me by the last post?

Col. P. (*produces letter*). Yes, and here it is. (*Reading.*) "Leave your carriage at the hotel. Come on foot to the little garden gate; then find your way to my room." I have obeyed all the instructions, and here I am. Now what do you want with me?

Hor. Ah, my dear uncle — a terrible adventure, about which I wish to speak to you.

Col. P. Go on. I am listening.

Hor. In the first place, then, as you know, I am married — a dear good little wife who loves, who adores me, and whom I love madly in return —

Col. P. Well, I don't see anything very terrible in that.

Hor. Wait, wait a moment, uncle. My wife was my first love, my only passion. Before marriage it was a continual adoration, and for two years and a half afterwards I was cited as the model of husbands. Every evening I passed with her, and as we could not always talk, we read together tales of love and passion, and I, who had till then attended but little to the literature of romance, as I read of those criminal and delirious passions; of those heroes of the modern drama, who, after trampling upon all the laws of society, finish their career by blowing out their brains, — as I read of all these fascinating crimes, I began to dream of them, till at last I aspired to myself attempt them; but, by an instinct of morality, I chose the most agreeable.

Col. P. Infidelity!

Hor. Yes, uncle, infidelity. My wife was charming — but then, she was my wife. With her it was paradise — but a terrestrial and a known paradise; while with others, with other woman, it was a new world, a fantastic elysium — an infernal paradise! At this thought my heart beat more quickly, and I exclaimed, "I, I too will be the hero of some burning drama!" and the first heroine who offered herself was —

Col. P. I understand — a married woman.

Hor. Not a bit of it.

Col. P. A widow, then. They are sometimes charming!

Hor. Possibly. But do not ask me for the details — the place, the person, the time, — all must remain a profound mystery. Suffice it to know that, not daring to risk a personal declaration, I begged a rendezvous, in a delirious note, which ended thus: "To-night, at midnight, in the grotto of the park. Give me a moment's happiness or I die." To which she answered, "O, Horace, I expect you!"

Col. P. "O, Horace, I expect you"?

Hor. Yes, "I expect you"! It was impossible to retreat; my honor was involved. Now, uncle, what would you have done if a woman had written to you, "O, Horace, I expect you"?

Col. P. What would I have done? Fire and thunder! I would have kept the appointment punctually — didn't you?

Hor. Yes, uncle; but, do all I could, I was not fascinated; I still loved only my wife. I was surprised and embarrassed at my good fortune; and an hour before the fatal rendezvous —

Col. P. You renounced it!

Hor. No, I went to supper. The champagne gave me a new courage. At the appointed time I repaired to the grotto. She was there before me. I threw myself at her feet; I seized her hand; I pressed it to my lips — when suddenly we were surprised — caught —

Col. P. What, by the husband? By the brother?

Hor. No, by a thunder shower. The rain fell in torrents; I was wet through; and the next day my new passion left town, and I have not seen her since.

Col. P. Well, then, it is all over now.

Hor. All over! Not a bit of it. For since that day my wife, formerly so trustful, makes no secret of her suspicions. To allay them I am forced to anticipate her every wish, her least caprice. My expenses are nearly doubled. I give dinners, balls, parties, every day —

Col. P. Well, and what matters that, if you can afford it?

Hor. Yes, certainly I can afford it. But Florence is young and pretty; she is surrounded with admirers. I know that she is prudent, that she has principles; but if she should discover my faithlessness — and this very day she will discover it, unless you, my dear uncle, will come to my assistance —

Col. P. Well, speak quickly. Tell me, what am I to do?

Hor. (*in a low tone*). Hush! Hush! Don't speak so loud.

Col. P. Why, what's the matter, now?

Hor. (*listening at door, R. H.*). My wife's maid, who is very curious, and if she should hear us — (*Opening the door, R. H.*) No, there is no one there. (*Shuts door.*) O, uncle, how difficult it is to deceive your wife!

Col. P. You prefer that your wife should deceive you; that would at least save you all the trouble. But you were saying —

Hor. That day before yesterday a frightful incident occurred!

Col. P. You betrayed yourself?

Hor. Almost. But that which nearly ruined me, may now, by your help, give me back my repose. In this fatal rendezvous —

Col. P. That of the grotto?

Hor. Yes. As she ran away — for she did run away — she left in my hands a bit of ribbon, — precious relic, — which, wrapped in a morsel of her tender note, I have sacredly preserved. But the day before yesterday I was dressing to dine out with my wife. She was ready, and waiting for me. I grew impatient: I rang: I called for a cravat. To aid me she opened all my drawers, she overturned everything —

Col. P. And found the mysterious souvenirs?

Hor. Exactly. She presented it to me with a defiant air. She demanded what the packet, so carefully preserved, contained. I, much embarrassed, replied that I did not know. She was about to break the seal, when a brilliant thought struck me. Recalling your former reputation as a gay gallant, I exclaimed that it was your

property — a deposit you had trusted to my keeping on your last visit, and it was my duty to preserve it inviolate.

Col. P. Well done! That was not so bad for a beginner.

Hor. Yes, but imagine her reply: "Since your uncle will be here to-morrow, I will take charge of this mysterious treasure, and restore it to him on condition that he shall first tell me what it contains."

Col. P. Fire and thunder! she is more than a match for you!

Hor. But that was nothing. You don't know half her malice — for, as the last time you came by the mail train, she has gone now to the station to meet you, and prevent me from giving you a hint, so I, who knew you were coming in your carriage, said nothing, but let her go. And now, uncle, you understand the service I expect of you.

Col. P. Yes, you wish me to take your place. Well, agreed; I'll do it. Fire and thunder! it is not the first time I have —

Hor. Hush! Hush! Some one is at the door. 'Tis she!

Flor. (*outside, knocking*). Horace, are you locked in?

Hor. (*in a low tone to COL. POMPLEY*). What did I tell you? Go, uncle, go now — ah, I forgot — a knot of blue and cherry ribbon — blue and cherry; don't make a mistake —

Col. P. No, I understand — blue and cherry! O, I have been in the same scrape myself!

Flor. (*knocking, outside*). Horace, open the door! Open the door, Horace!

Hor. (*To COL. POMPLEY*). Quick, go out by the garden, get your carriage, and return! Drive up at full gallop, crack your whip — all the noise possible, you understand!

Col. P. (*going*). Rely on me. In two minutes I will be here.

[*Exit, R. H. E.*]

Hor. (*goes to open door, C. D. F.* — *FLORENCE still knocking*). Here I am, my dear — here I am!

Enter FLORENCE, C. D. F.

Flor. Why, Horace, what are you doing? I began to think you did not mean to let me in.

Hor. I was just in the midst of a difficult calculation; and you know when I am engaged in figures.

Flor. (*suspiciously*). Ah, you were calculating. I thought you were locked up here with some one, who ran away at my coming.

Hor. (*aside*). She suspects something. (*Aloud.*) O, my dear, how could you suppose —

Flor. It was very silly — was it not? But to-day is for me a day of disappointments. Only think, your uncle has not come.

Hor. (*feigning surprise*). What, has he not arrived?

Flor. (*observing him*). How you say that!

Hor. I say, "What, has he not arrived?" as a man who is surprised at the delay which, as I see, annoys you.

Flor. Certainly it annoys me; for, notwithstanding his vanity, his ridiculous airs —

Hor. (frightened). Hush! Don't speak so loud. I'm not deaf!

Flor. (raising her voice). I say, notwithstanding his ridiculous airs, he is your uncle, and I wished to be the first to welcome him.

Hor. (aside). Yes, and to question him.

Flor. — And his delay makes me anxious. Perhaps some accident —

Hor. (aside). An accident — ah, I forgot to recommend one! (*Aloud, and gayly*). Yes, that's it, doubtless — an accident!

Flor. Why, with what a gay and pleasant air you speak of an accident to your uncle! Has he ever injured you, that you are so revengeful, or DO YOU FEAR his coming?

Hor. Fear his coming? Nonsense! What have I to fear? (*Aside.*) I don't know what I'm doing! Heavens, how difficult it is to deceive your wife!

Enter ROSE, C. D. F. — Noise of carriage without.

Rose (running in). A carriage has just arrived; it is Col. Pompley, your uncle. He is the same as ever; he has not changed. He kissed me twice as he jumped out of the carriage — and such a noise, such a hubbub! (*Archly to HORACE.*) O, he does not have any secrets, any mysterious —

Hor. (aside to ROSE). Little fool!

Enter COL. POMPLEY, gayly, C. D. F.

Col. P. (humming an air), —

“Cupid, 'mid the roses playing,
Met a pretty maiden straying.”

Ah, nephew, how are you? Here I am, you see, same as ever; and you, my dear niece, looking as charming as ever, I declare. I am very glad to see you.

Flor. And I, uncle, am very glad to see you, too.

Hor. (aside). I can easily believe it.

Col. P. Yes, an old bachelor of an uncle, with a large fortune and no children.

Flor. (smiling). Ah, that is your only wrong.

Col. P. Well, my wrongs are diminishing every day, and soon I hope you will have to love me for myself alone.

Flor. I ask for nothing better — entire confidence and frankness, provided you first give us the example.

Col. P. And of what is it a question now, eh?

Flor. Of an explanation. Leave us, Rose.

Rose. Yes, ma'am. (*Aside.*) That's always the way, as soon as the conversation grows interesting! (*Goes to door, L. H., which she tries to open.*)

Flor. Well, why do you wait?

Rose (unlocking the door). Ah, the door is bolted. Who can it be that is always locking these doors?
[*Exit, L. H.*

Col. P. Well, niece, you were speaking of an explanation —

Flor. Which I have to demand of you. (*Goes up to table, from the drawer of which she takes a sealed package.*)

Hor. (aside). She does not mean to lose any time. (*To Col. P.*) Blue and cherry — remember!

Col. P. Yes, blue and cherry. Don't be uneasy.

Flor. (showing package to Col. P.). Uncle, do you recognize that package?

Col. P. Do I recognize it? (*Looking reproachfully at Horace.*) What, nephew — when you had promised me to carefully preserve this precious relic, which is so dear to me!

Hor. (to his wife). There, you see; you hear him. It belongs to him, and you can return it to him.

Flor. One moment — I am very suspicious. (*To Col. P.*) Tell me, then, uncle, what does this mysterious paper contain?

Col. P. But my dear niece, reflect, consider — it is a delicate question.

Flor. O, you hesitate!

Col. P. No, not at all. This paper — if you insist upon it — contains a knot of ribbon; and this ribbon, if I remember rightly, should be blue and cherry.

Flor. (who has quickly opened the package). It is true.

Hor. There, you see —

Flor. And is there nothing else in this paper?

Col. P. (looking at Horace). No, nothing. (*Aside to Horace.*) Is there anything else?

Flor. But reflect, consider.

Col. P. No, I remember nothing.

Hor. (aside). O, heavens, I had forgotten!

Flor. And yet this paper is rather remarkable, and I beg you to explain the meaning of these words: "O, Horace, I expect you!" (*Hands him the note.*)

Col. P. (aside to Horace). Fool! Why did you not tell me that?

Hor. The fatal note in which I wrapped the ribbon.

Flor. It seems to me that Horace is the name of my husband!

Col. P. True; but that does not prevent it from also being mine.

Flor. Yours? Why I thought your name was Matthew?

Col. P. Yes, Matthew is my name; but Horace is the romantic; poetical name I always used on such occasions. It is mine, legitimately, and I, in my capacity of godfather, gave it to my nephew.

Hor. (aside). Dear, good uncle! If I only could embrace him!

Flor. Ah, you then are his godfather.

Col. P. Yes, my dear; and gave him the name of Horace. The parish register will prove it.

Flor. I must believe you. Here, take your precious relics; and you, Horace, forgive me. I will never again suspect you.

Hor. Dear wife! (*Embraces her. — Aside.*) Poor woman, how I deceive her.

Flor. And now, my dear uncle, you too must forgive me for the

explanations with which I assailed your visit. I owe you a reparation, and I am preparing a pleasant surprise both for you and Horace.

Hor. A surprise?

Flor. Yes, a young lady, whom you have not seen for six months.

Hor. What, Alice Woodville? (*Aside.*) The devil!

Flor. Yes, Alice Woodville — my little cousin, whom you thought very pretty, before she became your ward.

Hor. Yes, yes; she is not bad looking.

Flor. The praise is but faint. I appeal to your uncle — he has seen her in town.

Col. P. She is ravishing! Delicious!

Hor. (aside). I am sure that I am blushing.

Flor. Well, gentlemen, I announce to you her speedy arrival. She will be here to-day.

Hor. To-day?

Flor. Yes. But, Horace, what is the matter with you? Are you ill?

Hor. No, nothing. (*Aside.*) And I must receive her before my wife. By my embarrassment she will divine the truth!

Enter CHARLES ORMONDE, C. D. F.

Flor. (receiving him). Ah, Mr. Ormonde. Uncle, allow me to present to you one of my best friends — Mr. Charles Ormonde, a young lawyer.

Col. P. (shaking hands). A lawyer. Bravo! I like lawyers — it is a noble profession.

Orm. Sir, you are very kind. (*Converses apart with FLOR-ENCE.*)

Col. P. But, nephew, what is the matter with you? You are cold, stupid, silent, like one of your own bank books or ledgers.

Hor. No, uncle, I am as usual.

Col. P. Indeed! (*Aside.*) Then, my poor niece, I pity you.

Hor. (aside). I wish I were a hundred feet under ground. What I am going to do or say I know not — and my uncle, whom I have not time to consult! (*To Col. P.*) Uncle, I wish to speak to you, consult with you.

Flor. (who has overheard). What, about our new country house?

Orm. Of which I bring you the plan and title.

Hor. (embarrassed). Yes, yes, that's it.

Col. P. Well, well, after dinner will be time enough, for now I wish to speak to you of important business which concerns me; and, since we are quite a family party — remain Mr. Ormonde; you can remain; I may have some business for you.

Flor. Ah, you too wish to purchase a country house.

Orm. The same, perhaps?

Hor. (quickly). O, in that case, my dear uncle, I withdraw. I would not stand in your way — of course not; I couldn't think of it!

Col. P. No, no; it is something of more consequence than that. (*Tells it.*) You must know then, my friends, that after a gay youth, too much, I fear, prolonged, I feel the need of resigning —

Hor. What, your commission?

Col. P. My commission, sir? Fire and thunder, no! The army is the bulwark of our country. Never will I quit it. I am about to resign my life of intrigue and adventure, advocate reform, and — marry.

Hor. } (*together*). What, you uncle, going to marry?
Flor. }

Col. P. Yes, like a wise man and philosopher. I care not for fortune — I am worth ten thousand a year; and this I wish to offer to a woman poor, but beautiful.

Hor. Indeed!

Flor. (*taking his hand*). 'Tis well, uncle, very well. I did not expect it of you.

Hor. Nor I. Has she no dowry?

Col. P. None. Besides, what do I want of a dowry? What is gold, silver, or bank notes compared to purity, innocence, and virtue? So, then, you approve of my plan.

Flor. Certainly; and I am in haste to see my new aunt.

Col. P. You shall see her this very day. But you already know her.

Flor. Is it possible.

Col. P. Yes, and better still, it depends entirely upon you, or rather upon your husband, for she is his ward — Alice Woodville!

Orm. } (*together, and* Alice Woodville!
Hor. } *simultaneous-* My ward!

Flor. } *ly rising*). My cousin Alice!

Col. P. (*still seated*). Well, what is the matter with you all? You seem astonished!

Orm. But, sir —

Flor. (*restraining him*). Hush!

Hor. What, uncle, my ward, Alice Woodville, is the young person —

Col. P. Whom I wish for my wife; and whom I now ask of you in marriage.

Hor. Of me? (*Aside.*) Ah, this is too much, for after all he is my uncle and — (*Aloud.*) I cannot allow it; I cannot consent.

Col. P. And why not, if you please?

Hor. (*troubled*). Because — because — (*Makes signs to him*).

Col. P. Well, well; go on!

Hor. (*aside*). He does not see; he won't understand; there is no use making signs to him. (*Aloud.*) Because — the difference in your ages and characters —

Col. P. That is none of your business; and if you hesitate, after the service I rendered you this morning, fire and thunder! —

Flor. (*interrupting*). Service! What service?

Hor. O, nothing, nothing! (*To Col. P.*) I only wished, in

your own interest, for your own sake, to tell you that it was — (*whispers*) that it was she!

Col. P. (impatiently). She? Who? What do you mean? Can't you speak out?

Hor. (in a low tone). The mysterious grotto — the ribbon — blue —

Col. P. And cherry! O, heavens!

Flor. Uncle, what is the matter? You change color.

Col. P. Color? No, the color makes no difference. But your husband, who doubtless is mistaken, pretends, or rather gives me to understand —

Hor. (trying to stop him). Uncle!

Col. P. That she had been accused of some levity — an imprudence.

Orm. (warmly). It is a lie, sir — a foul, wicked lie! And I defy you, sir, or any man in the world, to cite the least fact —

Hor. (aside). Ah, now for the other one. (*Aloud.*) Excuse me, I said I thought —

Col. P. Then you are not sure?

Hor. O, yes I am.

Orm. Then, sir, you must give me the proof, or this instant —

Hor. I can't do it. Listen to me.

Orm. I won't listen! You must prove your words! The proof, sir, the proof!

Flor. Yes, sir, the proof!

All together. The proof, sir, the proof!

Hor. Heavens, what a situation! (*Aloud.*) Well, then, I know nothing. Marry her, uncle, marry her — as soon as you like.

Col. P. No, no; that won't do. You must speak out.

Orm. I demand an explanation, sir. You must and shall speak out!

All together. Yes, sir; speak out! speak out!

Hor. I'm in for it. (*Aloud.*) Well, then, *personally* — personally I know nothing. But I have *heard* a vague, confused sort of story about a meeting — a rendezvous — at night, in a grotto.

Flor. O, is that all? Calm yourselves, then — I know all about that.

Hor. (aside). She knows it! O, Lord!

Flor. I had thought that this pleasantry would never have been known, but now that it has assumed a graver aspect, I must tell you the whole story.

Hor. Me! Tell me? (*Laughing. — Aside.*) She's going to tell me the story!

Flor. Alice, who confides everything to me, told me that one day she found in her work-basket —

Hor. (aside to Col. P.). Yes, that's it.

Flor. A love letter — demanding a rendezvous that very night.

Col. P. And this letter —

Flor. I have never seen. In a first movement of indignation, Alice had thrown it in the fire.

Hor. (aside.) I'm saved! Huzza!

Flor. And, for some reason, she would never tell me who was the guilty wretch.

Hor. (aside.) Dear Alice! Good girl!

Flor. But I wished that he should be discovered and punished; so without telling Alice, in the evening — for it was in the evening —

Hor. (aside, and laughing.) And she thinks she is telling me what I don't know.

Flor. I sent to the rendezvous a person in whom I could trust.

Hor. Who?

Flor. My maid, Rose.

Hor. Rose, your maid? The devil!

Col. P. (laughing.) Delicious! delicious!

Flor. But the night was so stormy that the seducer failed to keep the appointment, — at least so Rose told me, — and she returned without seeing any one.

Hor. (aside.) The little liar!

Col. P. O, that can't be, for my nephew thought —

Flor. (quickly.) Thought! Thought what?

Hor. (quickly, and in a low tone.) Hush! Be careful.

Col. P. (recollecting himself.) Who thought necessary to refuse me his consent, for the honor of the family. It was well, very well; it was thoughtful of my nephew. But now that the storm, the mysterious grotto — the grotto of Æneas and Dido — is all explained, there is no longer any obstacle, and you can no longer refuse me your signature and blessing, most honorable guardian.

Hor. No, I suppose I can't. Bless you, uncle, bless you.

Orm. (aside to FLORENCE.) Heavens, do you hear him!

Col. P. (aside to HORACE.) But come, let us make haste, for the eagerness of our young friend to defend her, is to me more suspicious than all the rest.

Hor. Do you think so?

Col. P. Let us go into the library, and arrange the marriage contract, which Mr. Ormonde here shall draw up in proper form; for I, who am rich, intend to share all with my wife, who is poor. So, sir, remember — mutual donation — I endow her with half my goods, and she does the same with me. Arrange it all, sir, properly and legally.

Hor. (aside, lost in thought.) So, then, it was Rose I met in the grotto.

Col. P. Well, Horace, are you coming?

Hor. (still dreaming.) I wonder if she did recognize me?

Col. P. (significantly.) "O, Horace, I await you!"

Hor. (starting.) Eh! What? Is it possible you can jest on such a subject?

Col. P. I told you I was in a hurry; so come along. Good by, niece, good by, Mr. Ormonde — don't forget my instructions. And you, my nephew and most respectable guardian, come along.

Hor. Rose in the grotto! I fear all will be found out. Heavens, how difficult it is to deceive one's wife! [*They go out, R. H.*]

Orm. Well, madam!

Flor. Well, sir.

Orm. Your husband consents.

Flor. It is your own fault; for at first he refused, and you, by demanding an explanation —

Orm. But, madam, how could I help demanding one? I could not allow the shade of a suspicion to rest on her I loved.

Flor. Doubtless the intention was laudable, but good intentions — you know the proverb.

Orm. I, then, have done wrong?

Flor. A wrong which assures you my protection and esteem.

Orm. You are most kind. But, meantime, here is a rival —

Flor. Who is fifty years old.

Orm. And who is worth ten thousand a year. What disinterestedness!

Flor. Which I do not understand, and which is new to him.

Orm. And your husband has personally given him his consent.

Flor. Which it was impossible for him to refuse — but which he may retract.

Orm. But who can force him to do so? Who can save us?

Flor. (*She rings*). For that we must seek new allies.

Orm. What are you doing?

Flor. I am ringing for Rose — my maid.

Orm. She whom you sent to the mysterious grotto?

Flor. Don't you believe a word of it. Rose is an honest girl, and goes to no lover's meetings — even at my command.

Orm. But why, then, did you say —

Flor. Don't ask impudent questions, but trust to me. (*Enter ROSE, C. D. F.*) Come here, Rose; I wish to speak with you. Rose, do you like your place with me, and do you wish to retain it?

Rose. Why, my lady, how can you ask me such a question as that. It's the best place in the city, and you, madam, are so good and kind — no ill humors, no caprices; and yet, no one has a better right to them.

Flor. And do you think I am really the mistress here?

Rose (*quickly*). O, yes indeed, ma'am, though master has the appearance of it; but he never orders anything but what you wish — appearances are sometimes so deceitful. It shall be the same when I am married to Dick Dareall. Did you know, ma'am, Dick has come back? I have just seen him, and he looks so fine in his uniforms — and a magnificent sabre cut right across the cheek.

Flor. Very well. But to marry Dick, you must to-day obey me punctually in every particular.

Rose. O, that's easy enough, my lady.

Flor. And you must obey without reply — without a question even.

Rose. O, that will be more difficult, for my thirst for knowledge

is very great. I fight and wrestle with it, but sometimes it throws, it is so very strong. However, my lady, I'll try.

Flor. In the first place, then, you must go to my husband, who is in the library with his uncle. You must steal softly up to him, and whisper to him these words, "THIS MARRIAGE MUST NOT TAKE PLACE. I FORBID IT."

Rose. What? I say that to my master, whom I respect and honor! Why, he will turn me out of the house!

Flor. On the contrary, he will listen to you with attention.

Rose. To me?

Flor. Yes; and if he makes any objection, you will add, "I FORBID IT, OR I WILL TELL ALL!"

Rose (eagerly). O, then there is a secret?

Flor. (severely). What! already?

Rose. O, this time it was not curiosity, but your interest, which prompted me. "I forbid you, or I will tell all." But that supposes that I know something — and I don't know anything.

Flor. No matter; it will produce the same effect. Go quickly! Obey me!

Rose. Yes, ma'am. (*Going. — Aside.*) Upon my word, this is a curious commission! I wonder why she don't tell him herself? (*Returning.*) Ah, he is coming here!

Flor. So much the better. Say to him what I have told you — nothing more, nothing less. (*To ORMONDE.*) Meanwhile we will attend to more important matters. (*FLORENCE and MR. ORMONDE, seated at table, L. H., examine the plans and titles.*)

Enter HORACE, R. H.

Hor. (speaking without). Yes, uncle; don't be troubled. All shall be arranged according to your wishes. I never saw such a wonderful eagerness! (*Sees ROSE.*) Ah, there's Rose. It's the first time I have seen her since I knew she was my companion in the grotto. She is rather good looking.

Rose (timidly). Sir! sir —

Hor. Eh, what? Why she is coming to speak to me — and my wife who is there —

Rose (approaching, embarrassed). Sir! sir —

Hor. There is no doubt about it; she wants to speak to me, and she is troubled, agitated — I never remarked it before. (*To ROSE.*) Go away; I'm busy now.

Rose. I only want to say a word, sir.

Hor. If I refuse she will make a scene. I'm in for it. (*Beckons her to come near him, at the extreme R. H.*) Well, Rose, what do you want?

Rose. I — I want to tell you, sir — (*Aside.*) O, I shall never dare. (*Aloud.*) To tell you, sir, that — that — there's a man wants to see you in the garden, sir.

Hor. O, is that all. (*Aside.*) I breathe again. (*Aloud.*) Well, I will go see him. (*Goes to door.*)

Rose. But, sir! sir—

Hor. (returning). Is there anything else, Rose?

Rose. I hope I have never been wanting in respect to you, sir — and you know I have never said a word to you about —

Hor. No, Rose, you never have. I appreciate your discretion, and some other time shall repay you, but just now I have business with Mr. Ormonde about this marriage contract.

Rose. Ah, that's just it.

Hor. What — this marriage?

Rose. Yes, sir. (*Aside.*) I suppose I must do it. (*Aloud, and with an effort.*) "This marriage must not take place. I forbid it." (*Aside.*) There, it's out. He is going to be furious.

Hor. (stupefied). What, you forbid it? But why? For what reasons?

Rose. My reasons? No matter — I forbid it. I won't budge from that.

Hor. But, Rosa! —

Rose. "I forbid it; or I will tell all!"

Hor. Hush! hush! Speak lower. Don't make such a noise!

Rose (aside). Ah! why, he seems more frightened than I am myself.

Hor. But my uncle — who has my promise. How can I break off with him?

Rose. That is your business. "This marriage must not take place, or I will tell all!"

Hor. Well, well, that's enough — I hear you. Can't you be quiet! I submit, I yield. (*Aside.*) O, what would I not give if I could turn her out of doors.

Flor. (rising). Well, Horace, what is it?

Hor. It is this marriage contract I was bringing to Mr. Ormonde.

Flor. And does that trouble you so much?

Hor. (observing ROSE). Yes, because, since I gave my consent to my uncle, I have thought, I have reflected that, in spite of his fortune, his age is such that possibly my ward's happiness might be compromised; and if you would aid me in making my uncle understand it — if everything could be arranged peaceably, and everybody satisfied —

Flor. O, willingly. I will take charge of it, and soon as your uncle returns I will speak to him, — but the man who is waiting for you in the garden —

Hor. I am going to see him. (*Approaching ROSE, while FLORENCE and ORMONDE are busy with the papers at table, L. H.*) Are you content, tyrant?

Rose (aside). O, an idea! I will do something on my own account. (*Aloud.*) No, not quite. I intend to be married myself in a few days, and I must have my wages raised to twenty or thirty guineas.

Hor. What, not yet satisfied? (*aside.*) What a little cormorant.

Rose. Yes, I must have an increase of salary, or I will tell all!

Hor. Hush! Take twenty, thirty, forty — anything you like — only hold your tongue! (*Aside, and going.*) O, dignity of man! O, authority of the husband! where are you now! [*Exit, c. d. f.*

Rose (*watching him out, laughing*). Ha! ha! ha! It is really too funny!

Orm. Ah, madam, it is magical! I cannot comprehend it.

Flor. What matters it? If you are happy you can dispense with the reason of your happiness. But you have no time to lose. Follow my husband; give him no time for reflection, but boldly ask him for the hand of his ward. On his return, your rival must find the place taken and occupied.

Orm. Ah, madam, how much I owe to you.

Flor. Nothing, nothing — but go at once.

[*ORMONDE kisses her hand, and exit, c. d. f.*

Flor. (*sits at table, R. H., and writes*). And now for a few words of this mysterious penmanship, which he will doubtless recognize.

Rose (*approaching FLORENCE*). Madam?

Flor. (*still writing*). Well, Rose?

Rose. Is it not possible that I should know something of this secret, — a little, only a little bit, — just so that I can practise with my Dick?

Flor. No, you must know nothing. I have forbidden you even to ask the question. (*Rises.*) But listen.

Rose. O, there's something more. So much the better —

Flor. Take this letter — which you must immediately, and with great mystery, give to my husband. (*ROSE takes letter.*)

Rose. O, that will be easy enough, when you are not here.

Flor. No, you must give it to him in my presence, but so that I shan't see it.

Rose. O, that will be more difficult — and if you would only tell me —

Flor. Silence! Here is my husband. Remember my instructions.

Enter HORACE, C. D. F., and comes down between them.

Hor. (*angrily*). This is beyond all patience! It is unbearable!

Flor. (*kindly*). What is the matter, dear?

Hor. It seems as if everybody had made up their minds to marry Alice — my ward.

Flor. (*naturally*). Indeed! And who is it now?

Hor. O, you would never think — Mr. Ormonde, your protégé. What do you say of such a suitor?

Flor. I? Nothing. That concerns you. And what answer did you give him?

Hor. O, the usual answer in such cases, when one does not know what to say, that I was very much flattered; that I should think of it, and would have the honor to write him as soon as possible.

Rose (endeavoring to attract his attention). Sir! sir! (FLORENCE goes up.)

Hor. (impatiently). What, again? (ROSE shows him letter.) Ah, a letter — and before my wife!

Rose. She is not looking.

Hor. No matter, I won't take it.

Flor. (coming down, quickly). What is it?

Hor. (confused). O, I was only saying that I — was going to write — some kind of an answer — to — this — Mr. Ormonde.

Rose (approaching, and speaking confidentially). I have put it on your table.

Hor. (signing to her to go away). Ah, I see it but too well!

Rose. (going away). You see, sir, there (*pointing*), it is there.

Hor. This girl's impudence will discover all!

Rose. (going to FLORENCE). Did I do it right? (FLORENCE nods affirmatively, and ROSE goes out, C. D. F.)

Hor. (sitting at the table, and reading the letter under the papers). Fortunately my wife did not see her. There really must be some protecting angels who watch over us husbands.

Flor. (who has approached, and now behind his chair). Well, sir, you are not writing.

Hor. (embarrassed). No, I — I was looking for a pen!

Flor. Here is one. (*Gives pen, and leans upon his shoulder affectionately.*) I don't trouble you — do I?

Hor. O, no, not at all. (*Aside.*) I wish she would go away.

Flor. And while you are writing I wish to talk to you about this new country-house. Sir Gilbert himself first gave me the idea of it, — for he is very amiable, very attentive to me.

Hor. Yes; one would think he was a little too much so.

Flor. (laughing). Yes, he was; but it was lost time, for I said to him at once, "I love my husband; and so long as he shall love me, AND BE FAITHFUL TO ME, I shall always love him; if indeed it were otherwise, O, then —" (*interrupting herself.*) But fortunately it is not a question of your love, but of this country-house, which is, he says, necessary to your health.

Hor. (aside, still writing). She will never go.

Flor. And I, too, am of his opinion, for, for some time — ah, even to-day — you do not seem well.

Hor. In fact, I am not at all at my ease.

Flor. Ah, you see, you need the air of the country, a country-house, where you can go comfortably in your carriage — for you must have that, too; your health depends upon it. O, if you loved me —

Hor. Can you doubt it?

Flor. (tenderly). I will not leave you till you have consented.

Hor. (aside). It seems as if a woman knew by instinct the times when a man can't refuse her. (*Aloud.*) Well — yes — yes; there, I consent; I buy it for you; I give it to you.

Flor. And the carriage too?

Hor. (impatiently). Yes — and the carriage too.

Flor. Ah, what a dear, good, kind husband you are. (*Kisses him.*) There, there's your reward; and you always let your wife have anything she wants.

Hor. (aside). Yes, when I can't help it. (*Aloud.*) But this letter I am writing to Ormonde —

Flor. And I am preventing you from writing. Well, then, I leave you; good by, dear, good by. (*Going, aside.*) And you think I don't know the motive of your generosity. Ah, my friend, trust not to appearances; they are sometimes very deceitful. [*Exit, L. H.*]

Hor. Good by. Ah, at last! (*Seeking for the letter.*) Let me see what this little fool can write to me about. (*Reads letter.*)

Enter COL. POMPLEY, C. D., gayly.

Col. P. Here I am. Huzza, for joy and pleasure! I have been to see the authorities, and have got my marriage license.

Hor. Your marriage? At present it is impossible.

Col. P. Impossible? What are you talking about?

Hor. (giving the letter). Here, my dear uncle, read — read this letter from Rose!

Col. P. (looking at it). O, Horace! why, it's the writing of this morning!

Hor. Yes, this is the natural consequence of learning woman how to write. There ought to be a law against it!

Col. P. (reading). "O, Horace, Mr. Ormonde has promised me one hundred pounds if he marries Miss Alice, your ward — you see, I told you he was in love! —"

Hor. What difference does that make? Go on!

Col. P. (reading). "I pray you, then — without commanding you —"

Hor. What a style!

Col. P. (reading). "To give her to him for a wife this very day. If you don't, I will tell all to yours."

Hor. She will tell all! Do you hear that? What a scene! what a noise! what a scandal! And the chapter of refusals of which my wife just spoke. O, uncle, for my honor, for my peace of mind, for the sake of my future happiness, it is absolutely necessary —

Col. P. That I should renounce mine? You're a pretty fellow.

Hor. No; but if you are bent upon getting married, there are plenty of other women in the world. Why do you insist upon Alice, whom you scarcely know, and who has no fortune?

Col. P. No fortune! (*With concentrated rage.*) She has a hundred thousand pounds!

Hor. Not a bit of it. You are mistaken. She did not inherit; but the other relative — her cousin —

Col. P. You mean he *was* the heir; but now —

Hor. Eh, what do you say?

Col. P. Three days ago, in a duel in Paris about an opera dancer, he received a mortal wound, and died without a will.

Hor. Are you sure?

Col. P. I was at the office of the minister of foreign affairs yesterday when the news arrived. There is no other relative. She inherits all.

Hor. Ah, now I understand the motive of your disinterested affection!

Col. P. You have given me your consent, and if you break your word I am no longer obliged to keep mine, but I will tell all to your wife.

Hor. You, too! But, uncle —

Col. P. Come, decide quickly; make up your mind.

Hor. And what do you wish me to do? How can I free myself from the yoke of this domestic tyrant, emboldened by my weakness?

Col. P. Nothing could be easier. This very letter proves she is only fishing for a higher bid. For one hundred pounds she belongs to the opposition party; for two hundred she will be on our side.

Hor. Do you think so?

Col. P. I am sure of it. I will answer for everything.

Hor. Ah, my good uncle, how much I owe you. I am only sorry to put you to so great an expense.

Col. P. Not at all — that don't concern me. It is your business; you must furnish the money.

Hor. No, no; you must pay. Whose marriage is it? Yours, of course!

Col. P. Yes, but whose fault is it? Who has made all the trouble? Why, you, and you must pay the money.

Hor. But I tell you no!

Col. P. And I tell you yes. Fire and thunder! — Ah, here she is.

Enter ROSE, C. D. F.

Rose (running in). Sir! sir!

Hor. Well, what do you want now?

Rose. Miss Alice has just arrived. She is with your wife, who has sent me to tell you, sir.

Col. P. (To HORACE.) You see there is no time to be lost. *(Aloud.)* Rose, come here.

Rose (approaching). You want me, sir?

Col. P. Yes. *(Aside to HORACE, examining ROSE.)* I had not remarked it, but she is very pretty. Ah, you rogue, you were a lucky dog!

Hor. O, uncle, how can you think of such a thing. *(Examining ROSE.)* The fact is, she is not at all bad looking. Come here, Rose; my uncle wishes to speak to you.

Rose. (passing between them). What can they want of me, I wonder?

Hor. (after a moment's pause). I have read your letter, Rose.

Rose. O, you have read it! *(Aside.)* I wonder what was in it?

Col. P. Yes, he has read it.

Rose. O, he has read it!

Col. P. And I, too.

Hor. I am not going to blame you, Rose.

Rose. Thank you, sir; you are very kind.

Hor. But what is past is past.

Col. P. And you must never speak of it again.

Rose. O, I have never said anything about it. (*Aside.*) How could I, when I don't know what it is?

Hor. But you said to me, "I will tell all."

Rose. Yes, I said that, it is true.

Col. P. But you won't tell anything, because you wish to marry this Dick Dareall; and we offer —

Hor. In the first place, to double your wages.

Col. P. And, in the second place, to give you two hundred pounds as a wedding present.

Rose. Eh, what? Give me two hundred pounds?

Col. P. Yes. (*Opening his pocket-book.*) Ready money, cash.

Hor. But only on the condition that you hold your tongue.

Col. P. And preserve perfect secrecy.

Rose. It is not possible. I must be dreaming. Here, somebody bite my finger.

Col. P. (*handing her bank-notes.*) Here is the money.

Hor. But you won't say a word? You promise secrecy?

Rose. I swear it. (*Extending her hand.*) May I be —

Hor. There, stop, that will do; don't swear. (*Joyfully.*) Embrace me! (*As she offers to kiss him, he repels her.*) No, embrace my uncle.

Col. P. Willingly; for to her I owe my marriage. (*Kisses her.*)

Hor. And I my peace and happiness. On second thoughts, Rose, I will embrace you. (*Kisses her. — Aside.*) Ah, that reminds me of the grotto! (*Aloud.*) I have nothing now to fear. I have regained my conjugal authority.

Col. P. And you should make the most of it.

Hor. You are right. I will be master now. I go to see my wife.

Col. P. And I to see the notary. (*To Rose.*) Remember, not a word!

Hor. Not a syllable, or you will never marry Dick.

[*They go out, C. D. F.*]

Rose (alone). O, you may trust me! I can't tell what I don't know! O, Dick, Dick, we will be married immediately, and now I'll run and tell him all about it. (*As she goes to door, enter LADY FLORENCE, C. D. F.*) O, my lady! my lady! you were right, indeed, when you said that I should marry my Dick if I obeyed you!

Flor. Indeed!

Rose. O, yes, ma'am; and, besides, master has doubled my wages, and your uncle, after reading my letter — or rather your letter — gave me two hundred pounds as a wedding present.

Flor. I understand. And now I am going to give you —

Rose. Another letter? O, I don't ask for anything better.

Flor. No, not a letter, but new instructions to tell him.

Rose. O, no, ma'am; I can't do it.

Flor. But I only wish you to tell him —

Rose. That's it; I can't do it. I am obliged to leave your service. We must part company.

Flor. And why?

Rose. Because with you I must not speak, and with them I must hold my tongue. To earn my new wages I have promised silence.

Flor. (aside). And so Miss Rose has deserted to the enemy.

Rose. And now, my lady, I want to ask a little favor of you. Dick Dareall, my intended husband, is tired of the army, and wishes to enter into your service with me; and if you will only speak a good word for him to the Colonel, to get him his discharge —

Flor. Alas! Rose, I too, like you, am pledged to silence.

Rose. O, but madam, you are so good and kind, I know you will consent; for if you do not, I will be obliged —

Flor. What, to leave me?

Rose. O, no, ma'am, not that. My affection, my devotion would prevent me, but (*archly*) "*I will tell all.*"

Flor. (aside). Ah, ha! I'm caught in my own trap. (*Aloud.*) And what would you tell, miss?

Rose. I would tell your husband that it was you who told me to say, "*I will tell all.*"

Flor. (aside). She is right. That would ruin all my plans. (*Aloud.*) Well, Rose, I will think of your request, and this evening —

Rose. O, thank you, my lady, thank you. I knew that you would understand; and now I'll run and tell Dick everything is settled, and he may come this evening. O, I knew you would understand.

[*Exit* Rose.]

Flor. Yes, I understand; I understand that if I am not careful Miss Rose will soon be the mistress of this house. (*Enter ORMONDE, C. D. F.*) Well, what news?

Orm. Disastrous! I called upon your husband to receive his answer to my proposal. He was not alone. He, your uncle, and the notary were talking so earnestly together that, as I opened the door, I heard him speak these words: "Yes, uncle, Alice is now yours. I am strong; I no longer have any fear —" My appearance interrupted him — but he distinctly spoke those words.

Flor. And unfortunately he spoke truly. Fate is against us. Rose has gone over to the enemy, and I know not what course to pursue.

Orm. What, you at a loss? You, who sport with obstacles? Have I not seen you this very day, by a power magical and miraculous, change, at your will, your husband's resolutions? For that you needed but a word —

Flor. And this word, should I speak it now, would perhaps force him once more to obey, but it would be for the last time. This word, this mysterious talisman, by which I bend him to my will, will no sooner be known than its prestige will be dissipated, its power broken.

Orm. I do not understand you; but you will protect — will save me!

Flor. It is my dearest hope, and yet (*hesitating*) I know not — I can answer for nothing — but I will do my best. Ah, he is coming! Quick! go! Leave me alone with him.

Orm. You are my only hope.

[*He goes off, L. H.*]

Enter HORACE, C. D. F.

Hor. (entering). I will endure it no longer! Where are my servants when I call for them? And Rose; why has she gone out without my permission?

Flor. (aside). What firmness in his voice! Ormonde was right; he is no longer afraid! He has regained his confidence, and, with it, power.

Hor. I breathe again; I am a new man. I have just given them a severe scolding. It is so long since I indulged in that luxury I had almost forgotten how. (*Seeing FLORENCE.*) Ah, my dear, you here?

Flor. Yes; I wish to speak to you on business.

Hor. O, about the country-house and carriage, I suppose.

Flor. No; you have already promised me those.

Hor. (aside). Yes, in spite of myself. If it were to be done again I would not yield so easily. (*Aloud.*) Well, what is it you wish? Speak quickly, for I expect my uncle in a moment to arrange the papers for his marriage.

Flor. You are then decided on this marriage?

Hor. Yes; he is my uncle — my only relative. It is all in the family, and for a hundred other reasons too long to explain, but against which there can be no objection. (*Sits himself in a chair.*)

Flor. But there is one objection which seems to me somewhat important. Your ward, Alice, loves another.

Hor. O, that makes no difference to my uncle. (*Plays with his chain.*)

Flor. At present, perhaps not, when his passion obscures his reason; but he will sooner or later repent his marriage with a young girl who does not love him, and who is poor.

Hor. Poor! That's the way you women always judge — by appearances. Appearances, my dear, are very deceitful. Alice, on the contrary, is very rich!

Flor. (astonished). Very rich?

Hor. Yes, she is a great heiress. Her cousin is dead; she is the only relative, and she is worth one hundred thousand pounds!

Flor. (quickly). And your uncle knew it?

Hor. Of course he did. He always knows what he is about.

Flor. (aside). And poor Ormonde, who is so disinterested and so much in love! O, it is not fair! Come, let me be bold and generous, and even at the cost of my power save his love. (*Going to HORACE, who is comfortably seated in a chair.*) Horace!

Hor. Well, what is this important business of which you wish to speak to me?

Flor. O, a very difficult, a very entangled affair.

Hor. Yes, I suppose so; for you women, who understand nothing about business, and are frightened at the least trouble, while we men —

Flor. Yes, I know you men! and that is the reason why I come to you. You will easily arrange it.

Hor. That's very probable. Well, my dear, what is this bug-bear?

Flor. You remember what I told you this morning about the mysterious grotto?

Hor. (aside, starting up). The grôtto! Shall I never hear the end of it?

Flor. (aside). Ah, my power returns! (*Aloud.*) And my idea of sending Rose in place of Alice —

Hor. (quickly). But she found no one there! She told you so herself.

Flor. Yes, but it seems that she deceived me; and the proof is, that this very day she received from the seducer the enormous sum of — two hundred pounds!

Hor. (aside). Heavens! she knows all!

Flor. And it appears that Dick Dareall — her intended — a soldier —

Hor. Who has just returned from the Crimea —

Flor. Insists upon knowing where she obtained this money; and poor Rose, frightened by his threats, told him everything — even to the name of her seducer.

Hor. (aside). The devil she did! (*Aloud.*) And this name! do you know it?

Flor. No, but it will soon be public, for, in his fury and jealousy, the soldier has sworn to kill him. He is now seeking for him, and unless you can bring him to reason, I fear there will be a murder.

Hor. And what the devil can I say to him?

Flor. You will preach morality to him. Counsel pardon and indulgence towards those who wronged him. Besides, as you said but now, *you men* alone have the intelligence and capacity necessary for business — such as this especially — and so (*saluting him*) I leave you with him.

Hor. (retaining her). But, wife?

Flor. Well?

Hor. One word — only one —

Enter COLONEL POMPLEY, C. D. F., in his hand, papers.

Col. P. Here I am. All the papers are ready, and —

Hor. (taking the papers). Yes, uncle, in a moment; by and by I will attend to you. Just now I have to speak to my wife —

Col. P. On household matters? I respect and honor them. That's just the way I shall be soon — when I am married. O, I shall be the paragon of husbands. But I forget; there's a man down stairs looking for you. He came in with Rose.

Flor. (to her husband). It's the soldier!

Col. P. He's coming up!

Hor. (To Col. P.). Quick! quick! Go stop him! Don't let him up, or all is lost!

Col. P. All lost? But how?

Hor. He knows all! There will be a frightful scene, for which I must prepare my wife.

Col. P. I understand. And you who longed to be the hero of a drama — a burning drama! Well, you have your wish.

Hor. (impatiently). But, uncle, go; don't lose a minute! Stop him, strangle him — but don't let him up! My happiness, your marriage — everything depends upon it! (*Pushes Col. P. out, c. d. F., then comes down.*)

Flor. (aside). And now, sir, for us two!

Hor. (aside). Yes, it's the only way; I must return to first principles, confess all to my wife, and beg for her forgiveness. (*Turning towards FLORENCE, hesitatingly.*) My dear!

Flor. Well — are you not going down?

Hor. (hesitating). No — that is — not yet. I wish first to speak to you — to consult you.

Flor. (pointing to the papers, which are still in his hand). What about the marriage contract — about those papers your uncle just gave you?

Hor. (still greatly confused). Yes — my dear. In the first place — I wanted to know your opinion —

Flor. Indeed! And you would pay some attention to my wishes?

Hor. What, I? But all your wishes, all your desires, you know are mine. For example, did I not this morning give you the country-house and the carriage as soon as you asked for them? Did I make the slightest objection? And now, as to young Ormonde and his marriage with my ward —

Flor. (interrupting). What, you consent then? Is it possible! O, what a good, kind, indulgent husband you are.

Hor. No, no; on the contrary, 'tis I who have need of all your kindness and indulgence.

Flor. What, my indulgence? What do you mean? Explain yourself!

Hor. (aside). Yes, that's the devil of it. I don't know how to explain. (*Aloud.*) You see, my dear Florence, that I married you for love alone — a burning love that time has not in the least cooled; on the contrary —

Flor. (interrupting). Well, there's nothing terrible in that.

Hor. No, of course not. But that — you see — is why I have loved you with an excess — a delirium of love — an exclusive passion, which perhaps was wrong!

Flor. Well, perhaps so; but I don't see the harm.

Hor. No, there's no harm, no positive harm; but then, a man who is continually making love to his wife becomes ridiculous; and so, through fear of epigrams, through self-love, or something else —

I don't know exactly how it happened, for I swear to you I did not love her —

Flor. Love her! Love who, sir? What do you mean?

Hor. (quickly). It was a moment of forgetfulness and folly — one moment only, only one — but which has forever destroyed my peace and happiness; and the proof, the proof is that to-day, of my own accord, of my own free will, without compulsion, — worn out with anxiety and remorse, — I have preferred to confess all — to throw myself at your feet — (*Is about to kneel.*)

Flor. (stopping him, and calmly). Stop, sir! There is no need of that.

Hor. What, not one word — one look of anger! And your forgiveness —

Flor. Is the more readily granted you, because your frankness authorizes mine; and that now I can without fear say to you, in my turn, — and I — I, too, am guilty!

Hor. (in the greatest astonishment). Eh? What?

Flor. Never, O, never, but for your confession, would you have known my fatal secret; never would I have dared to confess that I have deceived you — and for a long time.

Hor. Deceived me? You? Florence, in the name of Heaven, what does all this mean?

Flor. It means that our souls, our hearts, must be sympathetic, for even in our own crimes are we not the same?

Hor. No, no; I will not believe it. You are deceiving me! You are not guilty.

Flor. O, yes, indeed, I am guilty, and far more so than you, for you betrayed me for one you did not love, while I sinned for a man I loved — whom I love still —

Hor. What! you love him still? Who is he? Speak! tell me his name, that I may kill him! Ah, I know — Sir Gilbert Ralton!

Flor. No, no, not him. It was another.

Hor. Another? Well, speak — tell me the worst — how long have I —

Flor. (coolly). How long? O, it was about six months ago.

Hor. (starting). Eh? (*Aside.*) Six months! That was just the time of my little affair!

Flor. In a burning and delirious note, he besought me to grant him an interview —

Hor. (aside). Just like me!

Flor. An interview at night — at midnight —

Hor. (aside). My very words!

Flor. In the park, in a mysterious grotto.

Hor. (turning). No, it can't be! Wife, you are laughing at me?

Flor. Yes — and I have been laughing for the last six months.

Hor. What — then — the letter? the grotto? Ah, and Rose —

Flor. Was myself!

Hor. (embracing her). You? — O, happiness! Henceforth com-

mand, order — (*Kneels.*) Here at your feet I pledge myself to passive and absolute obedience!

Enter ORMONDE, L. H., COL. POMPLEY, C. D. F.

Col. P. (perceiving HORACE kneeling, starts). At his wife's feet? Imprudent! What are you doing? Hush! hold your tongue!

Hor. (rising). But, uncle, I have confessed all!

Col. P. Confessed? What a fool! The soldier didn't know anything.

Hor. But my wife knew all.

Col. P. She? Is it possible!

Hor. Yes. (*Confidentially, and pointing to FLORENCE.*) "O, Horace, I expect you!"

Col. P. (amazed). What, then it was she who —

Flor. Yes, uncle, it was I. I'll trouble you for that bit of ribbon, if you please. I presume you have no further use for your "precious relic."

Col. P. (handing her the ribbon). To the victors, madam, belong the spoils.

Flor. And as when the war is over it is their custom to reward their allies at the expense of the enemy, to you, Mr. Ormonde, I give my pretty cousin. My husband has given his consent.

Col. P. How — fire and thunder! —

Flor. Yes, and you, uncle, will give yours, too — for he is loved, and you, I know, would not separate two young and loving hearts! Besides, after so many conquests, what does a slight check matter to you now; and if you are still bent on matrimony, trust me for finding you a wife as beautiful, though perhaps *not so rich*, as cousin Alice.

Col. P. How — then you know?

Flor. Yes, uncle, we know all!

Enter ROSE, quickly, C. D. F.

Rose. Ah, my lady, here I am. I have brought Dick with me. He is down stairs, and —

Hor. We shall be very glad to see him, and we will be present at your marriage.

Rose. O, thank you, sir. (*With assurance.*) And as to the place that I have asked for him, I suppose, as a matter of course —

Flor. That you must no longer think of it.

Rose (astonished). Eh, what? But, my lady —

Hor. Yes, we have decided, my wife and I, that your demand was inadmissible.

Rose. O, then in that case (*aside to HORACE*) "I will tell all."

Hor. Very well; tell it, then.

Rose (disconcerted). What, no effect? But, my lady (*aside to FLORENCE*), "I will tell all!"

Flor. I have no objections.

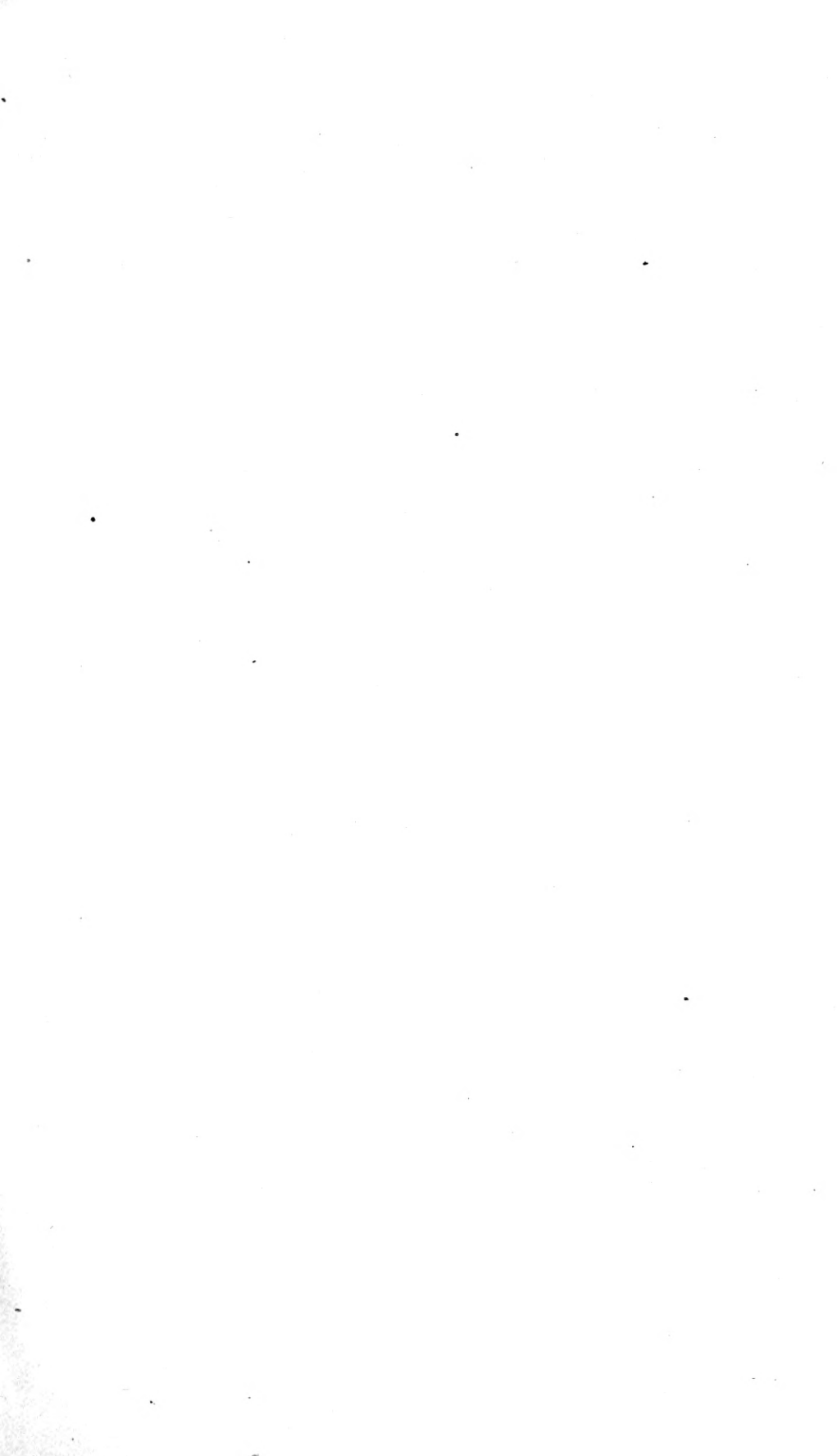
Rose. The charm has lost its power! But (*to Col. P.*), sir, I will —

Col. P. Yes, yes, you may tell all — we authorize you, we have no objection —

Rose. And I am the only one who is not in the secret — and yet a moment since I thought —

Flor. Ah, Rose, you, like the rest, judged only by appearances; while appearances — you know the proverb — gentlemen?

Hor. Yes — “APPEARANCES ARE DECEITFUL!”



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